



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-1000

## To Newly Commissioned Officers

I am writing to congratulate you on your recent commissioning. Well done! I know you have worked hard to achieve this personal success and are well prepared to begin your career as an officer in the Naval Service of the United States.

As a naval officer, you are following in a proud tradition and assuming a position of great responsibility which requires the utmost in leadership skills. You have received much training in the subject, and it is something about which you need to think deeply and often.

Leadership, by its nature, carries heavy demands requiring you to stand alone, follow your conscience, and do what is right. When you face a leadership dilemma, remember, *you are the Navy*. To the individual Sailor, the Navy is not a fleet of ships, aircraft, and thousands of people. To that Sailor, the Navy is his or her division. Decisions that directly affect that Sailor are not made by me or the Chief of Naval Operations. They are made by the division's senior enlisted and you, their division officer. Your everyday example and leadership will color that Sailor's view of the entire Navy. I expect that you will always take care of your people, treating them consistently with dignity and respect. They, in turn, will take care of you.

The Navy needs you to be a leader 24 hours a day, every day, in every situation. Loyalty up and down the chain of command is necessary but must never substitute for your personal responsibility to do the right thing, and it must never compromise the integrity of the Naval Service. Career concerns must never be an excuse for failing to live up to the requirement to serve honorably and with great personal character. Always be completely honest, and never permit a lie to be passed up or down the chain of command. If you do, you have done a disservice to yourself, the Navy, and the people you lead. Never be afraid to give your boss bad news. Do not accept expediency over principle, and always have the courage to stand behind what you believe is right, even in the face of opposition, and even if you think it may hurt your career. Your people will take note of your strong character and desire for excellence. If you lead, they will follow. Finally, where your personal conduct is concerned, take the advice that a respected American statesman routinely gave to newly elected officials: "If you'll have to explain it, don't do it."

You can expect the same high standard of leadership from the senior officers in the Navy. Navy leaders make tough decisions that directly affect programs and people every day. These decisions are always made on the basis of what is right, not what might be popular or politically expedient. We are accountable for those decisions, just as you will be at your command. The senior leadership is charged to uphold the same Navy core values of honor, courage, and commitment that you must depend upon and instill in your Sailors.

Once undertaken, the mantle of leadership never lightens. It widens in scope and increases in depth. This is your chosen path, as it was mine 32 years ago when I was commissioned and as it remains today as I serve as Secretary of the Navy.

You have my utmost trust and confidence as you face the upcoming challenges and opportunities. God bless you, our Navy today, and your Navy of tomorrow.